

August 4, 2005

Dr. Jeffrey P. Koenings, Director
Department of Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way N
Olympia WA 98501-1091

We are writing to commend one of your officers who went above and beyond his job duties in rescuing a sailboat stuck in the mud this morning. We were walking in Tugboat Park near Skyline Marina in Anacortes at about 8:15am. At the edge of the park above the entrance to the marina, we watched a 30-35' sailboat exiting the marina in mid-channel and suddenly come to a halt as its keel struck, then stuck in the mud. (The channel is not well marked and unexpectedly shallows.) The rope of its dingy then became caught in the boat's prop, stalling the engine. The tide was still going out; the boat was just to the side of mid-channel, partially blocking the entrance to the marina; there was very little room to maneuver any boat because of the shallows on both sides of the entrance; and, they would not have been able to set out anchors to keep the boat upright until the tide came in because the channel had to be kept open for boat traffic.

The elderly skipper climbed overboard and began swimming under the boat in an effort to free the dinghy's rope from the prop. After about 6 attempts, he was standing in water above his waist beside the boat catching his breath. A Wildlife enforcement boat, which was leaving the marina, approached the sailboat and the officer, who was alone in the boat, apparently asked if he could help. The skipper asked him to standby while he continued to attempt to free the rope. After 5-10 more minutes, he successfully cut the line and wearily climbed back aboard.

The officer rigged up a "bridle" line, secured a tow line and very skillfully maneuvered his boat in a position to pull the sailboat clear of the mud and keep both of the boats out of the other shallow areas and clear of the channel piling. After some powerful pulling and a good deal of effort on the part of the officer's boat, he was able to pull the sailboat free and clear, out of a very precarious situation.

This officer showed compassion by stopping to assist, patience while waiting for the skipper to clear the fouled line, and excellent boat-handling skills. We doubt that this kind of effort is merely routine for your enforcement officer. We can imagine how grateful we would have been in that situation, and were so impressed that we wanted to take the time to let you know so that you could not only be proud of how this officer represents your agency, but also pass on to him our admiration and appreciation. We're sure the people on that sailboat would agree with us.

Sincerely,


Jack Porter and Teri Tokarski

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